



releases. British scientists report a giant “hole” in the ozone layer is opening up each spring over the Antarctic. 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the former Soviet Union, resulting in the worst accidental release of radioactive

# LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## *A Decent Home and Suitable Living Environment*

Congress mandated “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family” in 1949 and reaffirmed it again in 1968. President John F. Kennedy warned in 1963 that if we neglect our cities, we will neglect the nation.

Since the end of World War II, families have often fled our inner cities and headed for the suburbs seeking the dream of homeownership. New freeways provided easy access to abundant and affordable land.

The character of city neighborhoods changed. Productive industrial factories and buildings became Superfund or brownfields sites. Vacant lots became garbage dumps. The tax base disappeared. Schools were neglected. America’s great cities were in peril and faced a myriad of environmental problems. Polluted air. Lead paint hazards. Asbestos. Radon. Vehicle gridlock. Aging and outdated infrastructure. As urban sprawl expanded, these problems also spread to suburbia.

EPA has worked with states, Tribes and cities to address urban problems like lead in our environment. Since 1978, average blood-lead levels in children have declined by nearly 75

percent. Sellers and landlords must disclose known lead paint and its hazards to renters and buyers. Since June 1999, contractors remodeling or renovating are required to give homeowners a copy of *Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home*.

U.S. households testing for radon gas have increased from 3.6 percent in 1990 to 10.2 percent in 1994. While radon is a concern for many Tribes and Pueblos in New Mexico, it is particularly a problem at the Taos Pueblo where 76 percent of homes detected high radon levels.

Between 1985 and 1994, 90 of the nation’s largest cities — except Los Angeles — saw a 72 percent reduction in the number of days when the air was considered unhealthy. In the Central-South region, El Paso has significantly improved its smog readings.

### ***Safer and Healthier Communities***

Today, over 2,800 chemicals are produced in amounts greater than one million pounds per year. EPA has challenged companies producing these chemicals to voluntarily publicize health data, and more than 230 companies responsible for 1,230 chemicals have shared information

about chemicals used in thousands of products.

Armed with the Food Quality Protection Act, EPA is reviewing 9,700 pesticide residue tolerances to ensure they meet new standards.

In February 1994, President Clinton directed agencies to ensure that minority and low-income communities are not disproportionately impacted by federal decisions. The region's Office of Environmental Justice is working with communities on issues involving low-income and minority residents. For example, in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, EPA is joining other community and government representatives in quarterly meetings concerning community and environmental justice concerns.

Another example is Beaumont, Texas, where a partnership has been established to increase air monitoring and data available to residents. The partnership includes representatives from EPA, neighboring industries, and residents of the largely African-American Charlton Pollard neighborhood. The partnership has also led to industry-sponsored scholarships, summer student employment, and alternate routes for truck traffic to make neighborhoods safer.



*Businesses, like the Centex Building in Dallas, are experiencing significant savings through low cost energy efficiency opportunities.*

The Energy Star Building Efficiency Program helps local businesses conserve energy. The Centex Building in Dallas was recognized for its unprecedented ENERGY STAR rating of 99, which means they have done all that they can feasibly do to become energy-efficient. Developers can save \$130 billion by 2010 if they take advantage of available,

low-cost energy efficiency opportunities.

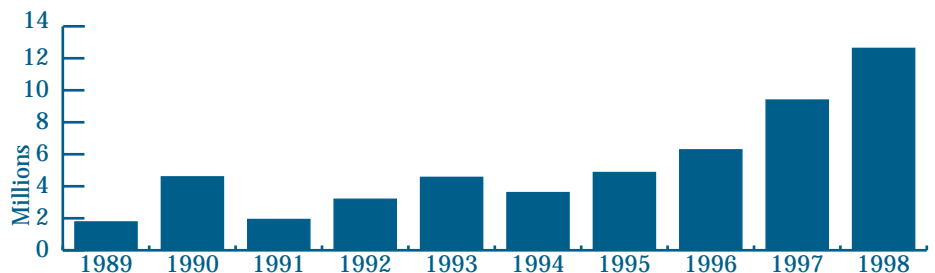
People spend nearly 90 percent of their time indoors, where air can be more polluted than air outdoors. Asthma rates have increased alarmingly during the past few decades, and poor indoor air quality is a culprit. Although there are no regulatory standards for indoor air, there are ways to improve the indoor environment.

After receiving complaints about extensive mold growth in the Birdville and El Paso Independent School Districts, the region assisted the schools in improving indoor air quality through EPA's "Tools for Schools" program.

### **Indian Country — the Nation's Native American Communities**

The U.S. Government has an important relationship with the first Americans — the Indians — created in the Constitution, treaties,

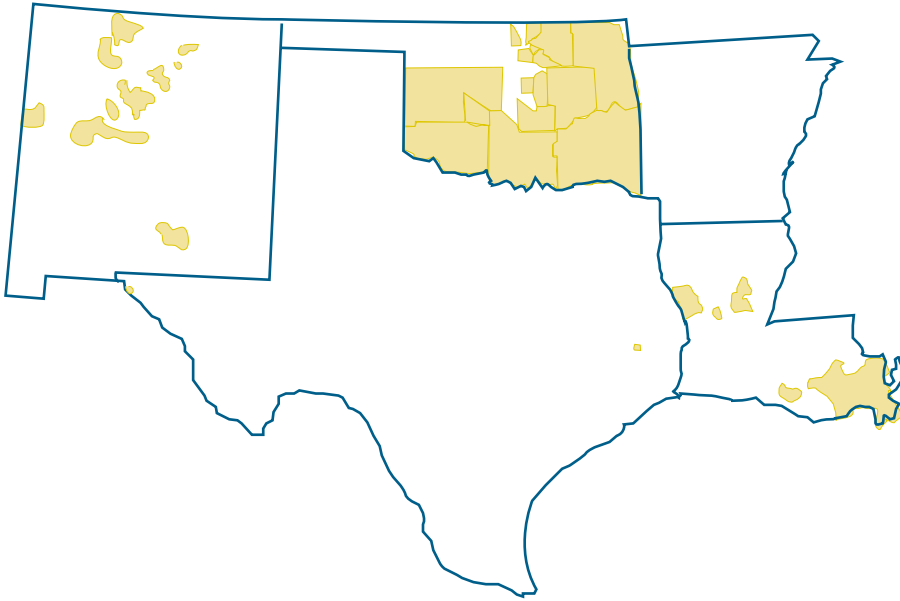
**Funding For Tribes**



sets state water quality standards. 24 nations commit to phase out production of CFCs. Yucca Mountain, Nevada and industrial waste. EPA and the Surgeon General urge every homeowner to test for radon gas, a cause of lung



## Indian Country



*In the Central-South region, 65 sovereign Indian Nations own 9 million acres of some of the most scenic land in this country.*

statutes, and court decisions. Today, Indian Nations form an integral part of our national system, and Native-American citizens retain much of their status as self-governing sovereign nations.

Indian Country, the part of the United States set aside for Indian Nations, is bigger than all the New England states combined. Indian Country includes 52 million acres — 8 million acres are farmed, 6 million are forested, and 38 million are used for grazing.

Despite accomplishments in the past decade, much remains to be done in

establishing environmental programs in Indian Country. We need to ensure that all Native Americans are afforded equal protections of their air, water, and land.

Nationally, the air is not healthy to breathe in 83 tribal communities. In the Central-South region, only one Tribe, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, in El Paso, is located in an air non-attainment area. Nationally, there are 180 major and 750 minor sources of air pollution in Indian Country.

Less than 4 percent of the Tribes have approved water

quality standard programs, and only 12 percent of Tribes have solid waste management plans. There are 1,600 open dumps in Indian Country.

Most of the 185 schools for more than 53,000 Indian children are over 30 years old and likely to contain lead paint and asbestos. The 20 percent of schools over 50 years old are likely to contain toxic PCBs.

Today, EPA has authorized 145 Tribes to implement 186 environmental programs under federal law, including 38 tribes to set water quality and pesticide standards.

In 1999, \$42 million was provided to administer environmental regulatory programs in Indian Country. In the Central-South region, 53 of the 65 Tribes received

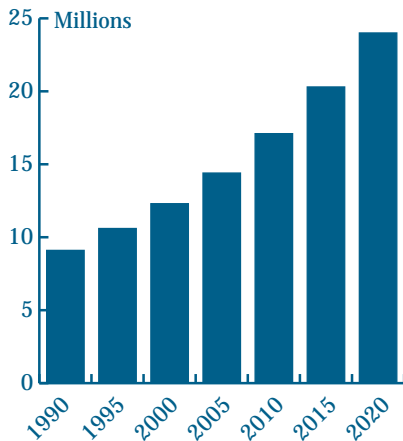


*Acoma Pueblo's Environmental Director, Stanley Paytiamo, welcomes EPA Deputy Regional Administrator, Jerry Clifford to annual Tribal Summit.*

assistance for environmental programs.

Since 1989, the two major regional tribal consortia have received nearly \$9 million to implement Superfund programs in Indian Country. More than 160 sites were evaluated for potential cleanup. The Central-South region has trained tribal staff to clean up abandoned sheep-dip vats which could ultimately result in cleaning up of hundreds of such vats on Indian lands in New Mexico.

### Border Growth



Since 1990, EPA has provided \$2.2 million to 11 Pueblos in New Mexico to operate waste transfer stations and recycling centers to manage solid waste.

EPA has also established programs within Indian Country to address water runoff, smog, brownfields redevelopment, and national tribal water quality. These programs rely on tribal leadership and creativity.

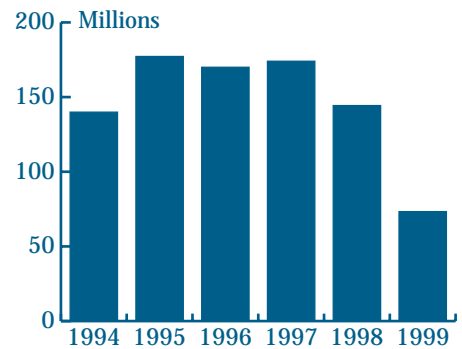
### U.S.-Mexico Border Communities

A unique part of our world is situated along a 2,000-mile stretch between the U.S. and Mexico. Defined in the 1983 agreement between Presidents De la Madrid and Reagan, the "border" comprises 62.5 miles north and south of this boundary. Nowhere in the world are two nations more distinctly separated, and yet united.

Economic differences are stark, yet the residents share many characteristics. EPA and its neighbors to the south want to improve environmental conditions to launch this area into an era of economic prosperity and sustainable development.

The U.S. and Mexico focused on the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The environmental side accords created two institutions, the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADB), the first of their kind in the world, who can evaluate projects and lend

### Funding For Border Projects



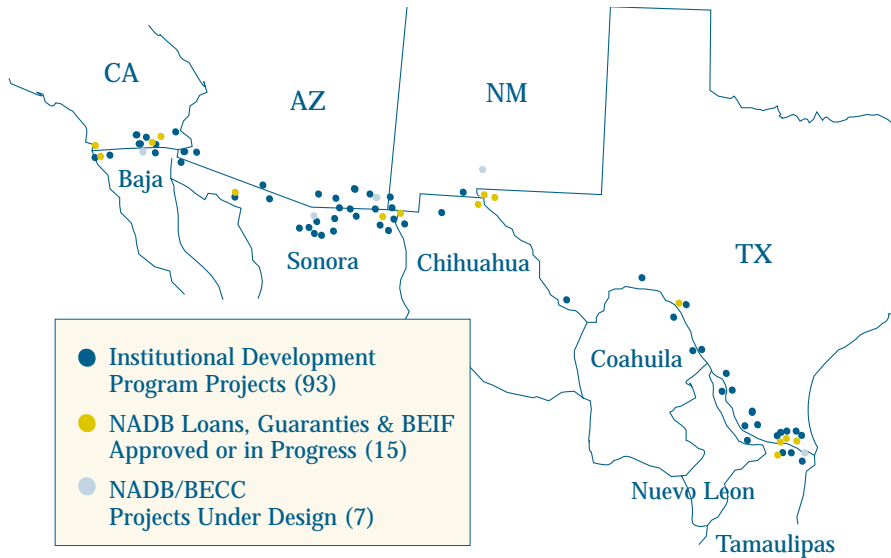
money on both sides of the border to improve water supply, wastewater treatment, and municipal solid waste disposal.

Mexico and the U.S. have continuously worked on the increasing demands of the region. Following the agreement, environmental concerns have been resolved voluntarily.

Binational workgroups undertake the most pressing border problems in air, water, hazardous waste, cooperative enforcement and compliance, pollution prevention, natural resources, health, contingency planning and emergency response, and environmental information.

An important milestone occurred in 1999 when the 10 border states agreed on a decentralized approach to environmental protection. The power and obligations associated with federal

## Border Projects Underway



*Border development projects will provide essential services to communities in both the United States and Mexico. In 2000, the \$11.08 million wastewater treatment plant opened in Juarez, serving 1 million people.*

mandates are transferring to the states, and nowhere is it more necessary than at the border.

One of the great border stresses focuses on it being the most rapidly growing region of North America. Population has gone from 1 million in 1960 to 11.5 million in 1999. If the projected growth rate of over 6 percent per year continues, this area will grow to 25 million by 2020. Such growth rates and unsustainable production and consumption surpass the carrying capacity of the natural resource base, and basic infrastructure, particularly for water resources. These conditions threaten the biodiversity, air

and water quality, and health. EPA seeks sustainable development at the border with a balance among social

and economic factors. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This is a lofty goal. NAFTA is seen as a solution to many problems. Meanwhile, some critics point to the economic and environmental cost of free trade. Based upon our partnership with new international institutions such as the BECC and the NADB, border environmental conditions will improve, and a renewed era of environmental protection and public participation has begun. The border region can be a model of international cooperation and local decision-making in protecting human health and the environment.



*Population growth rate along the U.S./Mexico border presents many social and environmental challenges to communities.*